



Consortium stimulates telecommunication

by Fran Crumb, Information Directorate

ROME, N.Y. — The Air Force Research Laboratory Information Directorate has joined with two other leading central New York technology organizations to form a telecommunications research consortium dedicated to improving regional telecommunications and stimulating the area's economy.

The New York Advanced Communications Environment (NYACE) is being established at Syracuse University to advise community organizations about new communications technologies, and to experiment with technologies for strengthening the telecommunications infrastructure in the Syracuse and Utica-Rome areas.

Besides the AFRL Information Directorate, the consortium includes the New York State Technology Enterprise Corporation (NYSTEC) and the Syracuse University Community and Information Technology Institute (SU/Citi).

"Investment in our telecommunications infrastructure is essential for more efficient delivery of government services and a stronger central New York economy," said project manager Steve Mercurio of NYSTEC. "The purpose of NYACE is to advise government agencies about new communications technologies that can improve their operations and make agencies more accessible to constituents.

"What began as a telecommunications study to connect far-flung state agencies and departments has been expanded to encompass several possible initiatives to improve the economy and quality of life in the central New York region," said Raymond P. Urtz, director of the Information Directorate.

"A new fiber-optic network being installed along the length of the New York State Thruway will form the basis for a pilot project to extend the new, high-speed state government intranet in a 30-mile radius around both Syracuse and Utica," said Urtz. "The NYACE initiative also envisions a statewide distance learning project to provide continuing education classes for public and private-sector employees."

New technology will allow classes to be taught by college and continuing-education faculty members in subjects such as language, communications, financial management, technology basics and citizenship. New Yorkers would be able to take these courses via the Internet from home, work or community centers.

The idea for the consortium was born out of a series of recommendations the organizations made to the state in a comprehensive study called the New York State Advanced Telecommunications project. NYSTEC spearheaded the study, which examined the state government's existing telecommunications infrastructure and recommended more effective uses for new technologies. Due to the ever-evolving nature of telecommunications and computing, NYACE is being formed to provide state and local government with ongoing assessments of emerging technologies.

"Consortium members have a wealth of regional expertise in telecommunications, computers and high-speed networks," said NYSTEC's Mercurio. "Each of our organizations is also extremely interested in local economic development. Much of the advice we can give to state agencies can also be applied locally in Syracuse, Rome and Utica."

NYACE partners hope to eventually see the latest innovations in communications and computing introduced earlier in central New York, rather than several years after introduction into major markets like New York and Boston.

"If central New York can obtain these cutting-edge technologies sooner rather than later, it will be easier to attract new businesses to the area and help our existing companies gain a competitive advantage," Mercurio said. @